

What is claimed is:

1) A surgical tool for treating varicose veins comprising:

an elongate handle with opposed ends;

a hook at one end of the handle, the hook having a gap of approximately .015 inches;

a piercing/dilating head at the other end of the handle, the piercing/dilating head having a bulbous shape and an axis, a sharp tip on the axis, and a dilating surface that extends along a curve about the axis.

2) A surgical tool as recited in claim 1, in which the handle tapers inwardly toward the hook.

3) A surgical tool as recited in claim 1, in which the handle comprises alternating sections of relieved surfaces and surfaces with polygonal cross-sections.

4) A surgical tool as recited in claim 1, in which the piercing/dilating head includes sculpted sections that help to prevent the tool from rolling on flat surfaces.

5) A surgical tool as recited in claim 1, in which the piercing/dilating head has an outer diameter that is wider than the width dimension of the handle near the head.

6) A surgical tool as recited in claim 1, in which the piercing/dilating head includes a stopping surface that is angled at an angle of at least about 30° with respect to the axis.

7) A surgical tool as recited in claim 1, in which the axis of the piercing/dilating head is co-linear with an axis of the handle.

8) A surgical tool as recited in claim 1, in which the portion of the piercing/dilating head is essentially in the form of a body of revolution.

9) A method for treating a varicose vein, comprising the steps of:

    piercing the patient's skin and dilating the resulting opening with the piercing/dilating head of a tool as recited in claim 1; and

    extracting the varicose vein with the hook of the tool.

10) A method for treating a varicose vein, comprising the steps of:

    using a tool to pierce the patient's skin at a selected location;

    using the same tool to dilate the resulting opening without making a longitudinal incision; and

    using the same tool to extract the varicose vein from the patient.

11) A method for treating a varicose vein, comprising the steps of:

    providing a tool that has an elongate handle with opposed ends, a hook at one end of the handle, and a bulbous piercing/dilating head at the other end of the handle;

    using the piercing/dilating head on the tool to pierce the patient's skin at a selected location;

    using the same piercing/dilating head to dilate the resulting opening without making a longitudinal incision; and

    using the hook on the tool to extract the varicose vein from the patient.